



"With malice toward none, with charity for all, . . . let us strive . . . to bind up the nation's wounds, . . . to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

—Lincoln's Second
Inaugural Address, 1865

wartime abolitionist crusade had subsided, many Northerners began to question whether the cause of emancipation had been a good one. Popular postwar novelists glorified the antebellum South, the plantation, and the master-slave relationship. Many Northerners, too, questioned the validity of the Fourteenth Amendment. Businessmen who wanted to invest in the South wanted an end to all sectional hostility. They wanted no more talk of war, of Reconstruction, or of the plight of the black freedmen. For many reasons, then, many Americans echoed the words of war hero Ulysses S. Grant, elected president in 1868 and reelected in 1872, when he said, "Let us have peace."

Postwar America pursues material progress

Americans still had great energy, but now they turned away from social crusades and immersed themselves in a vigorous quest for material progress. Burgeoning industries were soon supplying many Americans with an unprecedented standard of comfort, and supplying a few—the newly risen "captains of industry"—with unprecedented personal wealth. In the West, new frontiers in mining, cattle raising, and agriculture unfolded before eager settlers. Federally subsidized railroads spread across the face of the land, opening up new job and investment opportunities and making the various parts of the nation more interdependent than ever before. The steady influx of immigrants, the flow of people from farmlands to urban areas, and the disastrous fires in many cities called for endless amounts of urban construction.

Americans were busy. For the moment, they concentrated on material pursuits. Social reforms were temporarily forgotten as post-Civil War America, weary of conflicts and causes, embarked toward the twentieth century on a course that would bring her unparalleled wealth and power.